

# Zen and Nietzsche

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## I

NIETZSCHE says: "God is a sacred lie (*eine heilige Lüge*)."<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche was not merely saying that "God is a lie" as many atheists and anti-religionists do. Rather, he affirms that God is "the sacred." In that limitation, there is a point in which Nietzsche is in agreement with the view of religionists who believe in God. However, Nietzsche does not stop with that. He seems to say: "God is sacred. However, God is a lie precisely in being sacred." It seems to me that the above quotation should be understood in this fashion.

In what sense has Nietzsche affirmed God to be "the sacred"? At the beginning of *The Will to Power*, concerning the advantage which the Christian moral hypothesis brought, he speaks of the following purport. Christian morality granted an absolute value to man who is small and accidental within the flux of becoming and passing away; it conceded the character of freedom and perfection to the world filled with suffering and evil, and posited that man has the possibility of knowing this absolute value and perfection. In this way, it prevented man from rebelling against life and despairing of cognition. "In sum: [Christian] morality was the great *antidote* against practical and theoretical *nihilism*" (*Der Wille zur Macht*, Kröner edition, section 4). It may be thought that Nietzsche has recognized God, "the sacred," as that fundamen-

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<sup>1</sup> In Nietzsche's writings there is no literal formulation for this sentence. But it seems justifiable to interpolate it from his writings, particularly *Der Antichrist*, sections 18, 36, 55 and *Der Wille zur Macht*, section 141, etc.

tal source of value which confers transcendent, absolute value, in the midst of man's valuelessness and the world's meaninglessness, and as the foundation ground which saves man from his own self-negation and destruction. But *now* this God is dead. For such a "God" was a "lie" which man, who could not bear the *nihilum* of the valuelessness of himself and the meaninglessness of the world, has fabricated in the depths of his awareness of that *nihilum*. "Man does not speak of *nihilum*: man speaks instead of the 'other-shore'; or 'God'; or the 'true life'; or nirvana, deliverance, pure bliss." And Nietzsche regards this as "a tendency which is antagonistic to life" (*Der Antichrist*, section 7).

The paradoxical words of Nietzsche who says "God is a sacred lie" were deeply rooted in an awareness of what he himself calls a "fundamental falsity." This fact also indicates that Nietzsche's position was based on an acute historical insight, on the one hand, and that he was attempting to recover life and nature from its deepest source, on the other.

The artificial construction of a "God" in the depths of the awareness of *nihilum* is not some arbitrary and casual matter which man could refrain from doing. Nietzsche rather sees it as an inevitable enterprise rising out of the instinct for self-preservation deeply rooted in man's life. Further, he recognizes that it is a disguised and inverted function—indispensable for man's life itself—of a cosmological "will to power" which transcends man. But even though it is a *fundamental* enterprise for human life, it itself is an artificial construct, a self-deception.

To speak in historical terms, the empty construct of "God" was thus fundamental to human life, and therefore, down to the present day, it has functioned efficaciously as "the sacred" in the life of man, and especially in the lives of the weak and downtrodden. By believing in the existence of a "true world" behind this world, men could endure the *nihilum* of this world. But when Nietzsche proclaims that "now God is dead," he personally discerned, prior to all others, that this era has come to an end, and that no matter how fundamental it is, the era which ought to be aware of this deception as a deception, has arrived. This is the reason he preaches the arrival of nihilism.

On the other hand, Nietzsche bitterly censures the instinct of theologians, which fabricates the kingdom of God on the other-shore of *nihilum*, claiming that such an instinct brings about a spoliation of life and an attitude of anti-naturalness. "The instinct of theologians is the most widely spread and truly

*subterranean* form of falsity on the earth. . . . Wherever the influence of the theologians extends, *value-judgments* are overturned, and the concepts of 'true' and 'false' are necessarily inverted; what is most prejudicial to life is here called 'true,' while what most elevates, extols, affirms, justifies and makes life triumphant is called 'false' " (*ibid.*, section 9). According to Nietzsche, the essence of life is the instinct for the development and preservation of life, the instinct toward the accumulation of energy, the instinct to power. However, antagonism against life, nature, and the will to live has been proclaimed in the name of God. "Since the concept of 'nature' has been fabricated as the anti-concept to 'God,' the 'natural' could not help becoming the word for 'worthy of being rejected'—and the total world of that fiction has its root in *hatred* of the natural (— of actuality!)" (*ibid.*, section 15). It was Nietzsche's intention to cause the value-judgments of "true" and "false" which had been inverted in the name of God to be again reversed, and thus to recover life and naturalness which had been robbed in the name of God.

To sweep away every empty construct and return to the *will to power* itself—that is a return to life itself; it is a returning to the innocence of becoming (*Unschuld des Werdens*). That was, for Nietzsche, the attainment of *reality*, and at the same time the full realization of *sincerity*. Nietzsche's ideas of the "Over-man" (*Übermensch*) who can endure the *nihilum* without God, the will to the eternal return which says "If that be life, so let it be, once again!" and the Dionysian philosophy which is a "religious affirmation of life," all are grounded herein. Every attempt at a revaluation of all values which tries to expose the hidden source of the concept of "God" and to restore life and naturalness from their deepest root which had been robbed by God fails to succeed if it lacks the awareness of deception expressed in the phrase "God is a sacred lie."

Precisely the awareness of deception expressed in "God is a sacred lie," the awareness of what Nietzsche himself calls "fundamental falsity," is the decisive moment for the establishment of Nietzsche's nihilism and constitutes its core. In that sense Nietzsche's nihilism may be called a *nihilism based on an awareness of falsity*. As has been already made clear, falsity spoken of here is a fundamental self-deception—called "God" and "faith"—functioning in the depths of the fundamental *nihilum* of present existence; it is the self-deception perpetrated by the very disguised and inverted will itself to power.

## II

In Zen, too, it is said that "the triple world<sup>2</sup> is a deception." This is of course an insight shared by all Buddhists and it constitutes the background of Zen. For example, in the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, it is written that "the triple world is a deception and merely the creation of the mind. Apart from the mind, the realm of the six grains of dust ceases to be." What is here called "mind" means conceptual mind in modern terms. The conceptual mind is the discriminating mind which distinguishes between subject and object, between being and non-being, between right and wrong, good and evil, and so forth. We set up the world of objectivity over against the subjectivity of the self, and taking it as the objective world, make various distinctions concerning it; but these are all false and unreal worlds produced by the discriminating mind, and not the world of true reality. Once one departs from that kind of discriminating mind, the discriminated world also ceases to be and the real world manifests itself in its "suchness." The *Awakening of Faith*, continuing the above quotation, adds: "...since all things are without exception developed from the mind, and produced under the condition of delusions." Indeed, it goes on to say "Every discrimination discriminates the mind of the self; [but] since the mind does not see the mind itself, there is no form to be obtained." In these citations we have the true meaning of "the triple world is a deception," and at the same time find a clue to the standpoint of Zen.

The discriminating mind, which distinguishes the objective world in various ways and which thereby produces a discriminated world, distinguishes its own mind as well. This is an unavoidable activity from the original nature of what is termed the discriminating mind. And yet the mind cannot discriminate itself. The mind cannot see the mind itself—just as an eye cannot see the eye itself. For the true Mind is that which is entirely indiscriminable, that which can never be seen—or rather, is the very substance of activity which *discriminates*, the very substance of activity which *sees*. Even if called mind, it is

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<sup>2</sup> The triple world is the Buddhist conception of the world of transmigration which consists of the three realms of sensuous desire, form, and formless pure spirit.

Mind which has "no form to be obtained." Zen endeavors to *self-awaken* to this kind of Mind immediately and directly. In this self-awakening there is no need of the mediation of theory and doctrine. This is the reason that Zen advocates "directly pointing to man's Mind." However, what is the meaning of "directly pointing"? What is the true meaning of "the triple world is a deception"? And what relation do they have to Nietzsche's nihilism?

As we have seen above, the discrimination of the self-mind is an inescapable activity arising from the original nature of mind (the discriminating mind); and yet, the mind cannot discriminate the mind itself. Therein lies the essential dilemma which the mind possesses. The delusion rooted in this essential dilemma is generally called *avidyā* (Ignorance) in Buddhism, and is called "non-awakening" in the *Awakening of Faith*. That "the triple world is a deception" is also not something different from this Ignorance or non-awakening. Accordingly the realization that "the triple world is a deception" is not something said merely of the objective world; at the root of this awareness there is contained the realization of the delusory and deceptive nature possessed by the discriminating mind itself, which sets up that kind of objective world and distinguishes between subject and object. Just as the above dilemma is something essential to the discriminating mind, the realization that "the triple world is a deception," as well is, with "Ignorance" and "non-awakening," a matter intrinsic to the mind. On this point we find something congruous with Nietzsche's "fundamental falsity."

Again, Buddhism's "the triple world is a deception" calls to mind the following words of Nietzsche: "that the *value of the world* lies in our interpretation . . .; that previous interpretations have been perspectival valuations by virtue of which we can survive in life, i.e., in the will to power, for the growth of power . . . . This idea permeates my writings. The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact." (*W. z. M.*, section 616). The idea of Nietzsche that the value of the world lies in our *interpretations*, and that there is no world apart from our *value-interpretations*, is not essentially different from Buddhism and the Zen standpoint which hold that everything arises from the *discriminating* mind. For when there is discrimination, value-interpretation is involved. But in Nietzsche's case, those value-interpretations concerning the world, all of which are empty constructs and deceptive, had the positive significance of preserving life through a disguised

will to power. The world fabricated in terms of value, even though an empty construct, was something to be affirmed. For it was also one perspective of the will to power. In Buddhism and in Zen, on the contrary, the world perceived by the discriminating mind does not possess positive meaning as such. It is the world of Ignorance, of deception, which must be absolutely negated. The meaning that it is advantageous for the preservation of life is not found therein.

Why is this so? In Zen, the delusory nature of the world is not grasped from the angle of the will to power, as in Nietzsche's case; instead it is grasped as the issue of *illusion* or as the issue of *non-awakening* from the angle of the discriminating mind. It is grasped as the problem of how existentially to rid oneself of the very dilemma posed by the discriminating mind, "Even to set upon the quest for awakening is to go contrariwise." However, just as the mind cannot be objectively grasped, similarly neither illusion nor non-awakening, nor "the deception of the triple world" can be objectively realized as such, for in that very instance of attempting to treat them objectively as issues and conquer them objectively, there is illusion, non-awakening, and "the deception of the triple world" in the true sense. Precisely at that time when that fact is realized directly in us, do we rid ourselves of illusion and transcend non-awakening. But this hardly means to transcend towards an other-shore beyond illusion and non-awakening. As expressed in the words "outside of mind there is no Dharma, and this mind is precisely Dharma" and "this very mind is the Mind of no-mind" (*Transmission of Mind*), apart from the mind of discrimination and delusion there is no true Mind. Apart from the awakening of non-awakening, there is no true Awakening. Here is the reason why it is said that "when seeing, hearing, perception, and consciousness are simply abandoned, the paths of the mind are cut off and there is no place to enter Enlightenment; the original Mind is found only in the places of seeing, hearing, perceiving, and consciousness" (*ibid*). For this reason the Zen saying advocates: "Directly pointing to man's Mind." The immediacy of mind is no-mind, is original Mind.

Consequently, even though Nietzsche similarly makes problematic the delusory nature of the world and fundamental deception in some sense, in his case the will to power is affirmatively posited in their background. In Zen, on the contrary, there is nothing at all that can be affirmatively established in

their background. That there is nothing at all that can be so posited means that *outside of this mind* there is no Dharma, that this mind is *originally* the true *Mind*, the *Mind of no-mind*.

However, it is not that Nietzsche's phrase "fundamental falsity" referred merely to the delusory nature of the *world*; rather it referred to the fabrication of *God* in the depths of the realization of the delusory nature of the world—the inevitable functioning of the self-preservation instinct of life. Therein lay the reason that Nietzsche proclaims that "God is a sacred lie." Yet it is certain that at the root of that proclamation the will to power was affirmatively established. But it must not be overlooked that the core of Nietzsche's nihilism does not consist in the awareness of the delusory nature of the world; it lies in the awareness of the delusory nature of "God" in the sense spoken of above. Such Nietzschean themes as antagonism to life, robbing man of naturalness, the fabrication of a world beyond, the active nihilist or Over-man who can endure *nihilum*, were all themes attendant upon his conviction about the delusory nature of God. Since our focus of inquiry is Zen and Nietzsche's nihilism, we must further enter into that point.

### III

According to Heidegger, the "God" of which Nietzsche speaks is not merely the Christian God, but refers also to metaphysical principles from the tradition of Platonic philosophy on. In other words "God is used as a name for the supra-sensory world in general" (Heidegger: *Holzwege*, p. 199). Nietzsche's attempt at inversion of values was aimed at the overthrow of "God" as supra-sensible value common to Christianity and Platonism. This is the reason Nietzsche so bitterly censured Christianity and Platonism. And in the many instances where he made these censures, I would like to argue that his immediate and direct enemies were Paul and Kant.

For Nietzsche, the confrontation with Christianity was indeed a theme running throughout his career. But the objects of Nietzsche's severe attacks were institutional Christianity and Christian morals, not Jesus Christ himself. They were Christian *faith*, but not Christian *practice*. Nietzsche writes: "Christianity as an historical reality must not be confused with that one root that is called to mind by this name. The other roots from which historical Christianity has grown up have been far more powerful. It is an unexampled misuse of



words when such manifestations of decay and abortions as the 'Christian Church,' 'Christian faith' and 'Christian life' label themselves with that holy name. What did Christ *deny*? Everything that is today called Christian." (*W. z. M.*, section 158). Or again: "The word 'Christianity' is already a misunderstanding—in essence there was only one Christian, and he died on the cross. The 'good tidings' (Gospel, *Evangelium*) died on the cross. What has been called the 'good tidings' from that moment was already something contrary to what he lived through: an 'ill tidings,' a *Dysangelium*. It is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of the Christian in a 'faith,' for example in the faith in redemption through Christ. Only Christian *practice*, only a life similar to what he *lived* who died on the cross is Christian . . ." (*Antichrist*, section 39).

There could be no sharper dichotomy between Christus and Christendom than this. For Nietzsche then, who was Jesus Christ, and in what sense did Christendom change the *Evangelium* into a *Dysangelium*? "He (Jesus) demonstrates how one must live in order to feel 'deified' . . . and how one will not achieve it through repentance and contrition for one's sins: 'Sin is of no account' is his central judgement" (*W. z. M.*, section 160). Jesus did not have such concepts as rebellion, revenge, sin, retribution, and judgment. "He *lived* this unity of God and man as his 'glad tidings' " (*Antichrist*, section 41). That gospel was pure bliss; it was the freedom, the realization of the kingdom of God.

In contrast to this, says Nietzsche, it was Paul who grasped the death of Jesus as "God hung on the cross" and as "the sacrifice to redeem man's sins" and who fabricated, not a new practice, but a new faith. "A God who died for our sins, salvation through faith, resurrection after death—all these are counterfeits of true Christianity for which that disastrous wrongheaded fellow (Paul) must be held responsible." (*W. z. M.*, section 169). It was precisely Paul, according to Nietzsche, who brought back the Judaic legalistic spirit and resentment over which Jesus had conquered, who set up the concepts of repayment and retribution in the center of the explanation of life, and who established faith in the world beyond and immortality of the individual in order to make this world value-less. In place of natural causality, he set up a "moral world-order" in which the will of God rules over the behavior of man, and thus in place of human sanctification he robbed man



of his naturalness. "Paul was the greatest among all the apostles of revenge" (*Antichrist*, section 45).

Nietzsche's severe censure of Paul was aimed at Paul's *faith* that believed in the redemption of sin by Jesus and his resurrection. Moreover it was aimed at the point that that faith, based on a rabbinical sentiment, produced *Christian morality* which attempts to rob man of his naturalness, transform aristocratic values into lower-class ones, and elevate the inferior and vulgar life. It is a well-known fact that Nietzsche severely criticized Christian morality as a priestly morality and a slave morality in contrast to an aristocratic morality. In *Ecce Homo* he even writes: "What defines me, what sets me apart from the whole rest of humanity is that I *exposed* Christian morality" (*Ecce Homo*, Kröner edition, p. 406).

Within Jesus' *practice* Nietzsche rather saw true life. In contrast to this, within Paul's *faith* and Christendom after him he found a hostility to life rooted in a legalistic spirit, a decadence of life which extols self-abnegation. These were the issues concerning Christian morality. "Up to now one has always attacked Christianity not only in a modest way but in an erroneous way. As long as one has not felt Christian morality as the capital crime against life, its defenders have had it all their own way. The question of the mere 'truth' of Christianity is a matter of secondary importance as long as the value-question of Christian morality is not touched upon." (*W. z. M.*, section 251). Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity becomes essentially a criticism of *Christian morality*. The questions of the truth of Christianity, of knowledge of God, and of faith are also reduced to and treated as the issue of *Christian morality*. This fact was essentially linked with his position of seeing a fundamental *falsity* in the concept of God, and of setting up the will to power in the depths of this fundamental falsity.

#### IV

We have seen above that, for Nietzsche, confrontation with Christianity was the greatest task, and that the focal point of his criticism was not Jesus but Paul. However, apart from his confrontation with Kant, the rational philosopher of the modern world, would not Nietzsche's nihilism lose its sharpness? Is not Nietzsche's *nihilism* in a sense a negative inversion of Kant's *moral teleology*? At any rate, it may be thought to be so in one respect.

In the very beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* there is the well-known passage describing the three metamorphoses of the spirit into a camel, a lion, and then a child. The camel which hastens over the desert sands as the pious spirit bearing a heavy burden becomes a lion as it endeavors to create freedom as its own. As the lion itself attempts to become lord of the desert, it clashes with a great dragon as his last ruler. "What is the great dragon which the spirit no longer calls Lord and God? 'Thou shalt' is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says 'I will' " (*Zarathustra*, Kröner edition, p. 26). The great dragon on whose each and every scale 'thou shalt' glitters can perhaps be regarded as a symbol of the Judaic-Christian legalism which is represented by the Ten Commandments. However, is it not even more appropriate to see it as a symbol of Kant's transcendental ethics, which clarified the ground of possibility of every moral principle since ancient times and taught the categorical imperative of the unconditional 'Thou shalt,' and as a symbol of Kant's moral and historical teleology, which taught not only the postulate of God as the accordance of happiness and virtue but also the realization of a moral community as the people of God which pure rational faith should set up on earth by transcending the faith of the Churches? For Kant's philosophy was not only a modern reconstruction of Platonism but also a product of Protestantism.

That this interpretation of mine is not necessarily inappropriate should be clear if considered in conjunction with the fact that even in *The Antichrist*, written as a criticism of Christianity, Nietzsche often speaks of Kant, as for example, "How could one fail to feel Kant's categorical imperative as *dangerous to life* . . . the instinct of theologians alone protected it"; and "Kant's success is merely a theologian's success"; and "The instinct which errs without fail, *anti-nature* as instinct, German decadence as philosophy—*that is Kant*" (*Antichrist*, sections 10, 11). In fact, Nietzsche saw Kant as "in the last analysis, a cunning Christian (*ein hinterlistiger Christ*)" (*Götzendämmerung*, Kröner edition, p. 99). That words of criticism of Kant appear everywhere in Nietzsche, as for example in the following citations, illustrates the intenseness of Nietzsche's confrontation with Kant. "Kant: or cant would be a more intelligible characterization" (*ibid.*, p. 130). "Kant, in his 'morality' falsifies his interior psychological propensity" (*W. z. M.*, section 424). "Kant as a fanatic of the formal concept 'Thou shalt' " (*ibid.*, section 888).

Nietzsche's active nihilism arises as a means of destroying Kant's stifling system of moral teleology, which is permeated by that "Thou shalt." The Over-man overturns even Kant's "Kingdom of Ends," which had been substituted for the "Kingdom of God." In Kant, who never ceased teaching the primacy of practical reason, both the problem of knowledge and the questions of religion and history were ultimately reduced to the problem of *morality*. They were reduced to the "Thou shalt." Nietzsche stood diametrically opposed to Kant in this matter. And hence it was a natural conclusion for Nietzsche, who in reference to Paul censured the Christian morality which he thought to be rooted in Paul's faith, that the greatest "enemy against life" to be confronted in the modern world was Kant. With his confrontation with Kant Nietzsche's nihilism became even more scathing. The common element in Paul and Kant was the legalist spirit which stifles man's natural life. In order to come to the purity of the child who utters the sacred word "Yes," the lion had to bravely challenge the great dragon whose name was "Thou shalt."

V

When Nietzsche said that "God is a sacred lie," he was astutely countering the deceptive nature of supra-sensory value which appears in Platonism, Paul (Christianity), and Kant, the most modern representative of these two. He countered with the claim that such supra-sensory value was a fundamental falsity fabricated by life which could not endure *nihilum*, and hence exposed the fact that life and naturalness were robbed by the empty construct of God (supra-sensory value). However, when Nietzsche in this way regarded God as a deception and said that life is robbed by God, he violently attacked the *legalist spirit*. Accordingly he reduced all problems, that is the problem of cognition, religion, history, and so forth, to the issue of *morality*. And this reduction, in Nietzsche's case, is inseparable from the fact that the *will* to power is always placed at the root of the issue. This has been our interpretation of Nietzsche, as articulated above. The issues of priestly morality (slave morality) versus aristocratic morality; the one who died on the cross versus Dionysius; and his philosophy of the "Over-man" over against the "last man" are all developed by taking *morality, the mode of being of the will*, as the pivot.

Now, what meaning does this standpoint of Nietzsche have when we attempt to consider the question of Zen and nihilism? Nietzsche has censured as a fabrication the search for God and the positing of God in the depths of the awareness of *nihilum*. Zen also severely admonishes against seeking for Buddha and setting up Buddha. "Do not seek for Buddha outside" is a point which Zen always emphasizes, but "outside" hardly means the spatial outside alone. Even if one seeks Buddha in the interior of the self, in the depths of an inner *nihilum*, the 'seeking' itself already contains the meaning of *outside in respect to the self itself*. Consequently, "do not seek Buddha outside" means do not seek Buddha at all, whether inside or outside, for as long as one seeks Buddha, the true Buddha cannot self-awaken. This is the reason that Lin-chi says: "If you seek a Buddha, you will be seized by a Buddha-devil; if you seek a patriarch, you will be bound by a patriarch-devil; if you seek at all, all is suffering; it is better that there be no-matter<sup>3</sup> . . ." It is the reason he says: "When the seeking mind ceases, there is no-matter" (*Lin-chi lu*).

"The seeking mind ceases" does not mean something negative. It means the transcendence of self (*ecstasis*). In true transcendence of self, there is the finding of the true Self within an unending expansion of self-awakening: there is a realization of true suchness of the world and the self. The ecstatic self-awakening in which "the seeking mind ceases," the endless expansion of ecstatic self-awakening which finds the "Self" in its midst—that is the *self-possessed* world (the world naturally in its own-being) wherein there is no seeking either God or Buddha; it is the world of *Reality* of the phrase: "The blue mountains are of themselves blue mountains, the white clouds are of themselves white clouds." The fact of "no-matter" is also spoken of here. What is spoken of in Zen as "your Original Face prior to the birth of your father and mother" is nothing other than the infinitely expanded ecstatic Self-awakening in which our ordinary discriminating awareness itself

<sup>3</sup> "No-matter" stands for 無事 (*J. buji, C. wu-sib*), which has no equivalent idea in the West. For Zen, Reality is here and now, so it is illusory to search for Reality beyond here and now. However, "No-matter" is existentially realized not by withdrawing from but by overcoming "searching." It is the dynamic basis out of which one freely works for both oneself and others. Cf. Abe Masao, "Zen and Western Thought," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 4, p. 534.

—the seeking mind— is realized. This is the reason it is also said: “The harder you strive after it the further it is away from you. When you no more strive after it, lo, it is right in front of you. Its super-sensuous voice fills your ear” (*Lin-chi lu*). The relations between the self and others, between the self and the world, and even the relation between the self and God arise therein. The ecstatic Self-awakening which clearly and endlessly expands in the ten directions—without that there is no true Self, no true World.

When Nietzsche rejected God saying that “God is a sacred lie,” God was grasped as a supra-sensory value inimical to natural life. Moreover that supra-sensory value was not merely something of an ontological character; it was something of a legal, moralistic character which attempts to regard what extols life as sin and what suppresses life as noble. We have already touched upon the point that Nietzsche set up the will to power in the depths of the concepts of God fabricated as the entity which performs these functions. In this case, God is a “*sacred lie*” which makes the self-preservation of life possible by causing *nihilum* to attain fullness, on the one hand, and at the same time God is a “*sacred lie*” produced by the instinct of theologians which brings about an inversion of the concepts of “true” and “false.” That it is considered as a “*fundamental falsity*” is also because God himself was one perspective—historically, at any rate, efficacious—of the will to power. The perspective which was elaborated by the disguised and inverted will to power was God; it was the other-shore after life; it was Christian morality based on them. Nietzsche’s active nihilism tears off this disguise of the name “God,” and by overturning from its foundation the mode of being of the inverting will which regards the extollation of life as a sin, returns to the will to power itself which lies at the deepest root of life. To return to the will to power itself, to always stand therein—for Nietzsche, therein was Reality, and the innocence of becoming.

Therefore for Nietzsche life, *nihilum*, God, the innocence of becoming were all perspectives of the will to power. The reason for his considering *God* to be “a sacred lie” and for his censure of Paul’s *faith* as giving a ground to a priestly morality is that despite the fact that they were perspectives—seemingly efficacious for life—of the will to power, Nietzsche saw them as ultimately self-deceptive enterprises of the will to power functioning hostilely against life. That cognition, religion, and history were grasped in essence as questions

of morality was also based on their all being grasped as perspectives of the will to power.

## VI

Now, from the perspective of religion, and especially of Zen, at least the following two questions must be asked of this standpoint of Nietzsche.

Firstly, when Nietzsche speaks of God and faith, how is the *problem of death* grasped therein? Nietzsche writes in the following way in the chapter entitled "On Free Death" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Die at the right time: so teacheth Zarathustra." For Nietzsche, the ideal death is precisely death not too late, not too early, "the free death which cometh unto me because *I* want it." In the same chapter he also writes: "The consummating death I show unto you, which becometh a stimulus and promise to the living." How, then, did Nietzsche view the death of Jesus? "Verily, that Hebrew [Jesus] died too early whom the preachers of slow death<sup>4</sup> honor: and to many hath it proved a calamity that he died too early" (*Zarathustra*, p. 78). We have seen above that Nietzsche found what is truly Christian not in the faith of Paul but within the practice of Jesus. That practice was one of compassion (*Mitleiden*) and love which, not being hostile even to those who do one violence, prays together with them, suffers with them, loves them. "This 'bringer of glad tidings' died as he had lived, as he had *taught*—*not* to 'redeem men' but to show how one must live. Precisely this *practice* is his legacy to mankind" (*Antichrist*, section 35).

If I may say so, for Nietzsche, death was the consummation of life. Jesus exhibited the evangelical practice of compassion and love, but since he died too early he ended without knowing how to love the great earth and life. Nietzsche interprets this fact as causing Paul and the apostles of the early church to raise the questions "who killed him, who is his real enemy?" to bring about the faith in his sacrificial death for the sake of the redemption of sin and in his resurrection, and to produce the decadence of life, a morality of resentment. Here we see the forms of Nietzsche, the philosopher of life who views *death* from the side of *life* alone, and of Nietzsche, the anti-moralist (who

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<sup>4</sup> Christian clergymen who teach the necessity of enduring suffering.

grasps morality as the greatest problem), who grasps even *faith* exclusively as a *morality* which causes a degeneration of life.

However, is death in fact something exhausted in the consummation of life? Can the true nature of death be grasped by seeing death from the side of life alone? Do not Paul's words "I die day by day" (1 Corinthians 15-31) on the contrary express the true nature of death, and accordingly the true meaning of life? Zen, which self-awakens to the birth-and-death of the moment and grasps birth-and-death itself as the Great Death, on this point differs from Nietzsche and rather is in agreement with Paul. An existential self-realization of death is essential to a great affirmation of life. From this standpoint the fact that Nietzsche focused his attention only upon the legalistic spirit within the Pauline faith and censured faith exclusively from the angle of morality as something which produces a priestly morality that causes a suppression and degeneration of life, must be said to miss the true meaning of faith, and in turn, of religion. This fact causes us to recall that Kant's understanding of religion which while taking radical evil as its theme, ultimately did not touch the core of religion and was based on his attempt to grasp religion from the standpoint of practical reason, morality. To Paul, faith did not suppress life; it was the living of a new life which is supported by the realization of death. As he said, "—always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4-10) and "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2-20). Paul died and rose again with Christ. In that case, needless to say, Christ's death and resurrection was for Paul a spiritual fact which made his own resurrection through death possible. It was not something merely fabricated in the depths of *nihilum*, rather a living Reality in which spiritual life became real and present in him. Paul's is a standpoint of the self-realization of ontological life which ultimately cannot be reduced to the issue of morality. On this point, Zen, which realizes birth-and-death itself as the Great Death and gains a new Life of rebirth through the realization of the Great Death, does not differ from the standpoint of Paul in essence.

Having taken up the theme of awareness of death in Nietzsche and having stated that the core of religion cannot be touched as long as religion is grasped by reducing it to the problem of morality, as in Nietzsche, we must inquire



secondly whether Nietzsche's standpoint of the *will to power* truly expresses the *innocence of becoming*.

As repeatedly said above, when Nietzsche regarded God as a sacred lie, Nietzsche himself recognized the fact that in one aspect it was an enterprise inescapable from the instinct of self-preservation of life which cannot endure *nihilum*. In other words, for Nietzsche God too was one perspective of the will to power. But God was rejected as an empty construct because it was a self-deceptive function of a disguised and inverted will to power. Nietzsche proclaimed the arrival of nihilism and emphasized that one had to live as an active nihilist, i.e. Over-man, who can endure *nihilum* without a God. This was because however much it was for the sake of preservation of life, he rejected that kind of self-deception and lived with utter sincerity by returning to, and taking his stand in, the fundamental will to power itself. For Nietzsche it was precisely therein that the innocence of becoming became present and true naturalness shone forth. Nevertheless, was Nietzsche's standpoint of the will to power one in which the innocence of becoming and true naturalness really present themselves? Rephrased from the perspective of Zen, the question would seem to be best put as follows: Is Nietzsche's standpoint of the will to power in fact "the place where the seeking mind ceases"? Is it truly "no-matter" in the sense above mentioned (p. 25)? This rephrasing is necessary because in Zen the innocence of becoming and true naturalness is realized only in "the place where the seeking mind ceases" and in "no-matter."

Nietzsche's will to power may perhaps be said to express the innocence of becoming as a cosmological will which regards even God as a perspective of itself and which also restores the naturalness which has been robbed in the name of God. And yet, when seen from a Zen perspective, even if it is cosmological and not at all of the character of a personal God, is not the will to power still the "seeking mind"? However deeply the will to power is realized as such it is "something" affirmatively posited in the background of God as "a sacred lie," but not "Nothingness." It is a "matter," not "no-matter." As has been stated above (p. 17 ff.) Zen, like Nietzsche, emphasizes the delusory nature of the world and severely admonishes against seeking for Buddha and setting up Buddha. Unlike Nietzsche, however, Zen does not affirmatively establish anything in the background of either the world or Buddha—

Zen establishes 'nothing' in their background. Hence Zen's realization that outside of this mind there is no Dharma: this mind is originally the true Mind. In this Zen realization the "seeking mind" completely ceases and "no-matter" is realized. The innocence of becoming is also truly realized herein. And directness in pointing to man's Mind and Self-awakening to the true Mind is possible only through the realization of "nothingness" behind God and the world, i.e., the realization of complete non-objectification. On the contrary Nietzsche posits the will to power as the basic principle behind God and the world. However basic it may be, the will to power is not "Nothingness" but "something" affirmatively established and thereby not free from objectification. This is the reason I said the will to power is still the "seeking mind." Indeed, is it not the most fundamental form of the "seeking mind" itself? In that limitation, it cannot be called the standpoint of "having no-matter; that is the noble man." (*Lin-chi lu*)

The Zen standpoint of "the place where the seeking mind ceases is precisely no-matter," as touched on above, is the standpoint of a thoroughgoing ecstatic Self-awakening. In self-transcendence (*ecstasis*), a "naturalness" or "being so of itself" (*jinen* 自然), in which everything personal, including a personal God, is transcended, presents itself. It is "the originally pure," and "no-matter." And yet as ecstatic *Self-awakening* it is existential through and through. What Lin-chi calls the "True Man of no rank" also points to "the Man of no-matter," "the originally pure Man," as the manifestation of a "naturalness" which thus transcends everything of a personal character.

In that limitation, this kind of standpoint of Zen has something in common with the standpoint of Nietzsche rather than of Paul. For Paul's standpoint, though congruous with Zen as stated above in the sense of the presence of a new life through the mediation of the awareness of death, is to the end personal and not transpersonal *in its basic structure*. The standpoint of Zen, on the contrary, together with that of Nietzsche, is cosmological, yet at the same time existential. Therein lay the reason that Nietzsche's standpoint of the will to power restores the naturalness "robbed" by the personal God and causes the innocence of becoming to appear. However that naturalness, that innocence of becoming was not something mediated by a thoroughgoing awareness of death. This means nothing other than that Nietzsche's innocence of becoming was based on the standpoint of the will to power.

Nietzsche negated and rejected God as a "sacred lie" and was permeated by an awareness of profound deception and *nihilum*. But his standpoint which grasps everything in the perspective of the will to power, and consequently which, without the mediation of a thorough awareness of death, considers the problematic of religion from the angle of morality, can still not, when seen from Zen, be squared with "the place where the seeking mind ceases is precisely no-matter." The standpoint of the Over-man must still be said to be far from the standpoint of "the True Man of no rank." For the "innocence of becoming" to truly present itself, the *Over-man* must become the *True Man*.

### *Postscript*

There still remain some important questions here. For example, how can one progress from the standpoint of the Over-man to the standpoint of the True Man? And what of the existential, practical questions contained therein? Precisely these were the most important existential questions of overcoming Nietzschean nihilism. If I may be permitted to add one word in postscript concerning these important topics, which should be discussed but have been left out, I would suggest the following.

As stated above, Nietzsche's standpoint of the will to power does not transcend the "seeking mind" itself even though it is the source of the "seeking mind." This signifies that Nietzsche's "innocence of becoming" was still not "unblemished" and "pure." Accordingly, Nietzsche's own "will to power," which he considered had transcended every empty construct and deception, was itself, on a deeper level, an *empty construct* and a *deception*. These facts must be clearly realized. This awareness, that the "will to power" itself is an empty construct and a deception is not, therefore, a Nietzschean nihilism at all. That is, it is not a nihilism which I referred to above as "*nihilism based on an awareness of falsity*." As a nihilism which negates even the will to power itself as a deception, it may perhaps be called *a nihilism as an awareness of the devil*.

The nihilism which Dostoievski made problematic is rather of the latter type. The devil is the embodiment of the Nietzschean awareness of falsity. (Cf. my paper "Falsity and the Devil," *Risō* no. 355.) Lin-chi emphasized that to reach an authentic and genuine understanding of Buddhism, there must be a discerning eye of the Dharma for *discriminating Buddhas from devils* and taught

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that "both the Buddhas and the devils must be struck down." As long as Zen and Nietzsche is our theme, the disclosure of a way from the Over-man to the True Man is a necessary topic, and again, for that, the clarification of nihilism as an awareness of the devil and the elucidation of a way to overcome it is an inescapable theme. However, in this small essay, I could not go into that question.

Translated by David Dilworth